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THUMB-NAIL NOTES

that they hold aloof and the competition becomes one of mediocrity. Again, an open competition with sealed envelopes is not the way to obtain a satisfactory conclusion, for the simple reason that a sketch gives at best but an inadequate idea of what the final work will be like. Any one conversant with the subject knows that a decoration which looks very well in the reduced scale, may very probably prove unsatisfactory to full size. It is invidious to mention instances, but it would be very easy to do so. The only way in which a sketch can be properly estimated is through a knowledge of the painter and his work, so that the jury can form a tolerably accurate idea of the probable results. This is so true that no conscientious expert would attempt to base his verdict upon a sketch without knowing its author. Again, assuming for a moment that a sketch will give an adequate clue to the completed work, what guarantee has the jury that the painter can carry it to completion, except from a knowledge of what he has previously done. This is the great argument against the plausible theory of giving unknown talent an opportunity of coming to the front. Making a sketch is very different from executing the same on a large scale, and the conditions of mural painting are so different from those of easel painting that only experience will discover a man's ability to meet them. Until he has proved his capacity, the result is problematical, and \$5,000 is a high price to pay for a chance which may result in disappointment. The practical conclusion is that if the citizens of Massachusetts wish to secure the best work, they will have to seek it from among the best mural painters, and if a competition is resorted to, it must involve compensation to all the competitors. One more feature of the committee's proposal is open to serious criticism. It seems to contemplate dividing the work up between separate men, even possibly between as many men as there are panels to be decorated. There is a prevalent notion that such a course is more fair to artists in general, and that it is interesting to possess the work of several. If the panels were not in direct relation with each other this view might stand. But in the case of the Boston State-house they will be very close together and will need to be treated with a similarity of feeling if the result is to be harmonious. This is impossible if the work

is divided up between different men. The result in that case is bound to be heterogeneous. Would the staircase hall of the Boston Public Library be what it is if its decoration had not been intrusted to one man, and try and fancy the result of turning another painter loose to complete the panels in Sargent Hall. It really is about time that the promoters of these affairs displayed ordinary American business sense. Twenty-five thousand dollars is a handsome sum to pay for decorating the spaces in Memorial Hall, and the citizens of Massachusetts are justified in expecting great returns. They will not get them unless all the panels in the hall are entrusted to one painter. Every consideration should give way to the all-important one of securing a really satisfactory artistic result.



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A BILL has been introduced into the Massachusetts Legislature to restrict the height of buildings on Beacon Hill, so as to preserve uninterrupted from all points the view of the State-house. The bill is being opposed by counsel employed by the Woman's Club, who are erecting a club-house at Nos. 13 and 15 Beacon street. Work has been begun on a ten-story building. The land cost \$140,000; the building will cost \$300,000. To pass this bill will cut out two stories and reduce the rental value \$10,000 annually, thus imperilling the sale of stock upon which the possibility of building the house depends.

"THE GENERAL EXHIBITION OF AMERICAN PAINTINGS in Copley and Allston Halls, Boston, next November, under the auspices of the Boston Art Students' Association, will be a representative showing of high-class native work. The Boston Art Students' Association will manage the finances, but the jury and hanging committee will be national," says the *Transcript*, "and it is evidently the intention of the members of the association to give the event a national scope and character, so as to compete with the annual exhibitions held in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and New York."

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MISS BLANCHE DILLAYE, President of the Plastic Club, Philadelphia, is arranging to take a limited number of pupils upon a sketching tour during the summer in France. Four weeks will be spent at Crecy-en-Brie, in the picturesque valley of the Grand Morin, with excursions into the neighborhood, and four weeks at Barbizon. The class will sail from New York for Rotterdam on June 17.

THE ART CLUB, of Erie, Pa., has just concluded its second annual exhibition. Mr. William T. Evans, with his accustomed generosity, loaned several pictures.

ALEXANDER HARRISON has held an exhibition of recent work at Boussod Valadon's gallery in New York which was warmly received.

THE SPRING EXHIBITION OF WATERCOLORS AND PASTELS opened at the Art Institute of Chicago on May 2 with a formal reception, to which contributing artists received invitations.

THE EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL EXHIBITION of the Rochester Art Club is just concluded.

JUDGE PAYNE'S BILL to create an Art Commission for Chicago, to pass upon works of art for public exhibition, has just been signed by Governor Tanner. The bill gives a wide scope to the Commission, and under it nearly every work of art displayed in public will have to be passed by the Commission, which will be composed of the Mayor, the Presidents of the Park Boards and three artists, to be chosen by the Council.

THE COMMITTEE OF THREE, consisting of Messrs. George B. Post, John La Farge and J. Q. A. Ward, charged with the selection of a sculptor for the Lafayette memorial, to be presented to the City of Paris, have decided in favor of Paul W. Bartlett. His sketch-model will now have to be submitted to the French committee, which is composed of Mr. Redon, architect of the Louvre; MM. Paul Dubois and Guillaume, sculptors, and M. Rougon, Director of the Fine Arts. Mr. Bartlett's suggested scheme provides for a handsome architectural arrangement. Raised four steps above the ground level will be a smooth floor of masonry, about ninety feet long by seventy wide. While in a general way oblong, the four sides are treated with waving lines that produce a variety of

agreeable curves from every point of view. Upon each of the long sides, following the curves of the floor, is a parapet, in the centre of which is a group of one seated figure and two children. In the centre of the floor rises a pedestal, also oblong in suggestion, though treated freely. At each end of it will be a seated figure, representing respectively Liberty and Justice, and upon the sides will be inscriptions. The pedestal appears to be about thirty feet high. Thus far the whole structure, sculpture included, will be of granite. The equestrian figure of Lafayette, about fifteen feet high, which is set upon the pedestal, will be the only part executed in bronze. In this way due emphasis will be given to the important feature of the memorial, and all the rest, through similarity of material, will present a single effect and be directly contributory to the main idea. The sketch shows great possibilities. It is hoped that by the time the exposition opens the floor, parapets and pedestal may be in position in their final form and material, and that the sculptor may be able to set up the sculpture in staff, with sufficient approximation to their ultimate character to afford an opportunity for visitors to form a good idea of what the memorial will be like when finished.

TURNER'S FAMOUS PAINTING of "The Slave Ship" has been bought by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

THE TWENTY-THIRD ANNUAL REPORT of the Trustees of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston contains the following statistics: Number of visitors, paid admissions, 15,126; on free days, 133,899; free admissions on other days, 53,180; total, 202,205, a falling off of 26,253 from the previous year. Average number of visitors on Sundays, 1,510; on Saturday, 1,045. The expense of carrying on the museum during the year was \$51,056 and the income was \$48,734; deficiency, \$2,322.

FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS is the sum appropriated by the New York State Agricultural Society for the purchase, at their discretion, of one or more works from the fifty-ninth annual exhibition of the art department under its management. According to the schedule issued to artists in this region, entries are returnable by June 1, though the works of art, confined to oil, water color and pastel, will not be required until August 14.